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Senate

The Senate met at 2:30 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, we thank You for the beauty and wonder of life. Thank You for the people we know and love. Thank You for the opportunity to experience life's richest joys. Sustain our lawmakers today. Deepen and cultivate their understanding of primary things. Deliver them from majoring in minors and minoring in majors. Bless the thousands who labor for liberty on Capitol Hill. Keep them from becoming weary in doing well, as You remind them that their perseverance will bring a productive harvest.

We pray today for our military men and women and their families who sacrifice so much to keep us free. Protect them from the dangers of the sea, land, and air, and from the violence of the enemy.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will re-

sume consideration of H.R. 3057, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3057) making appropriations for foreign operations, export financing, and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today, we return to the consideration of the Foreign Operations appropriations bill. We began that bill last Friday with opening statements. Senators MCCONNELL and LEAHY are ready for Members to offer their amendments during today's session. They are not encouraging amendments, but if Senators do want to offer amendments, we do ask they come forward as soon as possible. I am very hopeful we can complete this bill tomorrow. I think it is likely we can do that if Senators will come forward today and offer amendments, if they have any.

We will be voting this afternoon at about 5:30, and we will be announcing a little bit later today what the nature of that vote will be. Senators will be notified once we lock in the time. It will be around 5:30 today.

As a reminder, tomorrow, at 10 o'clock in the morning, there will be a joint meeting with the House of Representatives. The Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, will be speaking to both Houses of Congress at that joint meeting.

We have 2 weeks remaining before our next recess. We have a lot of business over the next 2 weeks to conduct. The Democratic leader and I were just talking, going through our objectives, and will be sharing that and consulting with our colleagues as to how these next 2 weeks will play out. The floor schedule is going to be very busy. It will take precedence over other schedules, so we do ask Senators to keep

their schedules flexible so we can accomplish the many tasks before us.

HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Mr. President, on another issue, briefly—but it is an issue that means a lot to me as one who sees the real advantage in legislating in this arena—I want to comment on the issue of electronic medical records and the increasing necessity, if we are going to eliminate the waste and abuse in our health care system today, of focusing on ways to share information throughout our health care system, which has been too fragmented and too disjointed in terms of communication.

I want to share with our colleagues that we have worked a lot on this issue over the last 4 to 5 days, including the weekend, and that we have made real progress and have come very close to achieving the goal of having privacy-protected electronic health records legislation come before this body.

Senator CLINTON and I introduced legislation last June. Senators ENZI and KENNEDY have been working on legislation. Our goal has been to pull this legislation together. Indeed, we have made real progress in agreeing to outlines of strong legislation, which I am absolutely convinced will eliminate a lot of waste in the system, will improve quality, will increase efficiencies in the delivery of health care, will empower payments, and will improve patient safety throughout our health care system. So I am very excited about it.

We promote the use of electronic health records by adopting standards. You have to have similar standards throughout the system if people are going to come in and participate and share information. So we approached standards. We ensure quality measurement. We eliminate barriers to the adoption of this technology of electronic health records. And we incentivize providers and those throughout the system who use this information to actually adopt the standards with lowered barriers so the advantages can be realized.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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